



WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF.

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HILLSDALE people were both shocked and surprised when it was known that Jack Arsdale had run away with the circus.

"I knew he wasn't always quite straight," said one to another, "but I could never have believed this of him."

"Not always quite straight!" Ah, there was the secret! Boys, did you ever reflect that of all the poor, defeated strugglers in the battle of life, not one went down for the first time before a great temptation.

It is the repeated yielding in little things which undermines the defenses of the soul; silences the voice of conscience, and, at length, delivers the whole being a bound captive to the force of some evil impulse. Beware, then, of the first compromise with wrong. It is the small end of the wedge which will by-and-by rend the toughest spiritual fibre like a green twig.

So Jack Arsdale could have told, if he would, a long history of growing distaste for wholesome tasks, of cheating at lessons and examinations, of stolen visits to places of which he knew his parents would disapprove.

Having thus begun to barter the truthfulness of his nature for a love of idle pleasure and excitement, he was quite ready to be dazzled by the glamor of the great traveling exhibition which, after weeks of advertising, at last made its triumphal entry into the village.

The gorgeous, gilded vans; the strange, wild creatures from far-off mountain and desert; the train of patient camels; the great elephants, with their splendid housings; the clang of the martial music; to which the prancing horses kept time—all these inflamed his imagination with visions of a new life of change and adventure, beside which quiet Hilldale seemed utterly narrow and contemptible.

What must it be, he thought, instead of standing with the staring crowd in the street, to be one's self a part of the grand pageant—to throw off once for all the restraints of home, the tyranny of school, and become his own master?

It was a day of struggle, for Jack was not bad enough to be easily guilty of such treachery toward those who loved him.

Again and again his mother's face, pale and sorrowful, seemed to interpose itself between him and his glowing dreams.

As often happens, a small thing decided the uneven contest.

During the interval between the afternoon and evening exhibitions, Jack was lingering like one fascinated, about the tent where the beautiful trained horses were kept.

The expression of eager interest and admiration upon his face attracted the attention of a man who seemed to have general charge of the small army of grooms and hostlers.

"Look here, my lad," said the man, suddenly, addressing him, "you don't happen to know of some smart young fellow in want of a job, do you? I'm a hand short."

"I don't know," answered Jack, hesitatingly.

The man looked at him keenly.

"Because, if you do, I could make it an object for him. Light work, good pay, nothing to do between times but ride and see the country."

Jack straightened himself, with a half-defiant gesture, as if to silence some inward protest.

"Perhaps I might try it myself," he said. The man clapped him on the shoulder with rough familiarity.

"That's the talk! I saw it in your eye. Says I to myself, 'That's the chap for me! Well, be on hand at ten o'clock, sharp. We strike tents early, so as to travel in the cool of the morning.'"

Poor Jack! Surely, no other is so much to be pitied as he who deliberately decides to take a wrong step.

At supper, his mother noticed his silence and lack of appetite; but, to her loving questions, he replied that he was quite well.

She secretly rejoiced that he showed no inclination to go out, but, after reading awhile, went early to his own room. What consternation would have filled her heart, if she could have seen him turn the key noiselessly in the lock, and, with nervous haste, gather into a bundle two or three changes of clothing and such other small belongings as he thought he might be able to carry with him?

When all was quiet in the house, he stepped stealthily through the open window, and,

making his way along the low roof of the porch, let himself down and slipped away, like a thief, into the shadows of the summer night.

Once he looked back, his heart almost failing him. He wished that he had kissed his mother good-night. What if he should never see her again? He paused uncertainly, but, at the moment, the red blaze of a rocket rent the sky above the open, where the great white tents of the circus were pitched, bursting in a shower of colored lights, like a shattered rainbow.

To the excited boy the brilliant display seemed an omen of the new life before him, and, casting away his misgivings, he hurried on.

There is no undeciever like experience. Scarcely a week has gone over his head before Jack learned that the splendid show which had so allured him was only a gilded sham; the skilled performers and gallant cavaliers were but a weary company, when the curtains of the tent had shut them from the public eye. Even the clown, whose jollity in the ring set the spectators into convulsions of merriment, seemed, in private, both dejected and morose.

Yet, to Jack, the life of these various characters appeared easy when contrasted with his own. He was tall for his fifteen years, but his strength had scarcely kept pace with his growth; and the hard and unaccustomed labor required of him, combined with irregular and insufficient hours of sleep, taxed his endurance to the utmost.

He would have returned home a penitent, at the end of the first month, but for the false and foolish pride which barred his way.

Of his mother's forgiveness he felt sure, but he could not bear to meet his father's sterner eyes, and he dreaded the taunts of his old associates. Sometimes the atmosphere of roughness and profanity which surrounded him grew almost unbearable; yet he lacked the resolution to break away from its poisonous influence.

The unnatural strain ended at last. All day Jack had dragged himself about his tasks with a throbbing pain in his forehead which almost destroyed the power of thought.

Late at night he threw himself upon a pile of straw in a vacant corner. Hour after hour he lay there, his tongue parched, and his whole body burnt with fever. He felt his eyes slipping away from him, and visions of home passed before his eyes.

When the order to move was given, he was no longer conscious. Roughly bundled into a cart, he was driven away to the hospital, and the great exhibition moved on, careless of the poor wail it had left behind.

But the Heavenly Father, whom he had grieved, was not thus forgetful. The erring boy was given into tender hands. To the gentle nurse who had him in charge he was no mere patient, but a human soul. From his wild ravings, she was able to guess at something of his history, and from a little diary in his pocket she learned his name and home.

Jack will never forget the hour when he awoke at length to reason. Weaker than an infant, he seemed unable to move hand or foot. Even upon his closed eyelids, a weight rested which he felt powerless to lift. Yet he was conscious of a strange sense of rest and peace. He thought some heavenly presence was beside him, and wondered if he were yet on earth. With the fancy came a sharp pang.

"It cannot be heaven—I have been too wicked!"

A soft hand was laid upon his forehead, and at the touch a strange thrill quickened the slow currents of his blood, and he opened his eyes.

It was his mother's face that bent above him.

He felt no shock of surprise. It seemed to him as if she might always have been there, only his disobedience had hidden her from him. He did not try to speak—there was no need—since his eyes had asked all, and hers had answered.

Jack had "come to himself."

Anecdotes About Famous People

IT IS related of Napoleon that once, on an incognito visit with Josephine to a district in France, that he entered a humble cottage, where he found an old man in deep distress, while his wife and daughter were in tears.

The old man's son was a soldier, who was about to be tried by court martial, for some act of insubordination, and was likely to be condemned to death. The old man had resolved to intercede with the first consul: "Speak to Madame Bonaparte," urged his daughter. "People say that she is kind and indulgent; that her husband never refuses her anything."

"You are right," said Napoleon with a smile. "You cannot do better than invoke the aid of Josephine, and I myself will solicit Bonaparte in his favor, and endeavor to have your son entered in the Consular Guard." Then Josephine placed a ring on the girl's finger and pledged herself to provide a dowry when she should be married. The visitors went out without telling their names, but the son was saved and the daughter got her dowry. All such promises were held sacred by Napoleon and it was this trait in his character that endeared him to the common people.

In employing men to work at his Palo Alto farm, in California, the late Senator Stanford gave strict orders that they were never to strike, kick or whip a horse. On one occasion, while at dinner, one of the drivers in-

sisted that he must see the Senator. He was ushered in, with blood over his face, which was badly cut. "John knocked me down," explained the man, referring to one of the trainers. "What did you do?" asked the Senator. "Nothing," replied the man. "But you must have done something. I want the truth," persisted the Senator. "Well, I only kicked a horse," growled the man, "and John knocked me down." "Those were John's instructions," said the Senator, emphatically, "and he did just right."

The following anecdote of Gladstone was told at a dinner party by the great man himself. Mr. Gladstone said that all through his life he had been an excellent sleeper, and it was only on one occasion that he had ever lost a night's rest. All drew up their chairs more closely to hear the extraordinary matter that had caused the Premier to be sleepless. They expected it might be something of great importance. "I had been trying," he said, "to cut down an oak at Hagley, and was getting on with it very well. Then I heard the dinner bell ring, and I was obliged to leave the work unfinished, although not much remained to be done. As I took my candle and went upstairs the wind had risen high, and was making a great noise. I went to bed, and then the thought occurred to me that the wind would topple down my oak. The thought occurred to me again and again, and I really lost a good deal of a night's rest through that oak."